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SUBJECT: OFDA VISIT TO NEW IDPS IN DUBIE, CENTRAL KATANGA

Summary

¶1. In early December 2005, a new wave of internally displaced persons (IDPs) began arriving in the small town of Dubie in Pweto Territory in eastern Katanga as a result of a FARDC military offensive against the forces of Mai Mai leader Gedeon. By December 17, Dubie had received 10,000 new IDPs in addition to the 16,000 IDPs that had fled Mai Mai activity in July 2005. Almost all are living in camps, since the resident population of Dubie is of different ethnicity than the IDPs. Basic needs of the IDPs are currently being met, but food security activities and income-generating activities are recommended for the future since most IDPs will probably not return to their home villages until the beginning of the dry season in June-July. END SUMMARY

Background

¶2. (U) From December 15 to 17, OFDA Rep Victor Bushamuka took part in a United Nations-led interagency mission to assess the humanitarian situation in Dubie. Participating agencies and organizations in this mission included UNOCHA, WFP, UNICEF, MONUC, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), CARITAS, and the Association of Farmers Without Borders (AAFS). During the visit, the delegation met with military and political authorities, humanitarian actors in Dubie including MSF-Holland and the Catholic mission, health and education authorities, new and old IDPs, and also detained Mai Mai combatants.

¶3. (U) Dubie, a small town in Pweto Territory, is located approximately 405 km northeast of Lubumbashi and 96 km south of Pweto town in Katanga Province. Attacks on the population by insurgent Mai Mai under the leadership of Gedeon have been common in Pweto and the adjacent territories of Mitwaba and Manono since 2003. Since January 2005, however, the attacks have increased in frequency and brutality, reportedly because Mai Mai officers were unhappy at not having been offered sufficiently responsible positions in the new national army.

¶4. (U) In July 2005, Gedeon's group burned villages, looted, raped women, and killed civilians in the Manono and Mitwaba areas, and these attacks led to a mass displacement of rural populations to forest areas near the national park of Upemba and southward toward Dubie in Pweto territory. An estimated 16,000 people reached Dubie where they received assistance in non-food items from UNICEF and food rations from WFP for the first three months, basic healthcare from MSF-H, and seeds and tools from UMCOR for some IDPs that managed to acquire land. Those who fled instead to the forest were unable to later reach Dubie or other secure points eastward since all forest exit points were controlled by Mai Mai who prevented people from leaving the area.

Changes in the situation beginning November 2005

¶5. (U) For most of 2005, the FARDC did little to bring security to the region. However, in late November 2005, FARDC launched an offensive on Mai Mai positions starting from bases in Manono, Mitwaba and Dubie/Pweto. The Mai Mai fled the area without strongly resisting the FARDC advance. Some surrendered without fighting.

¶16. (U) The Mai Mai departure permitted many of the IDP families that had been stranded in the forest since the first half of 2005 to relocate and seek protection and assistance in Dubie. These "new" IDPs started to arrive in Dubie in early December and, by mid-month, 10,000 new arrivals had been registered. They originated largely from the localities of Nyemboakunda in Manono, Kyona Ngoyi in Mitwaba, and Kyona Nzini and Mwenge in Pweto. These

displacements bring the IDP totals for Dubie up to approximately 26,000 people. However, at the time of OFDA Rep's visit, IDPs were still continuing to arrive at a rate of 300 to 400 people per day.

¶17. (U) Newly arriving IDPs appeared exhausted. Some said they had walked 100-150 km to reach Dubie. They brought few belongings, and some were barely clothed, reflecting a long and difficult existence in the forest. Once in Dubie, they stay in three camps, rather than with host families, as they are of a different ethnic group than the general population of Dubie.

¶18. (U) Doctors Without Borders/Holland (MSF-H) provides free health care to IDPs through Dubie Health Center. MSF-H also supports the Dubie referral hospital in measles vaccination efforts and manages a therapeutic feeding center (TFC) located there for malnourished children. A supplementary feeding center (SFC) in Dubie is run by the Catholic Church and managed by nuns. The SFC receives assistance in fortified corn mill from Anvil Mining, an Australian mining company (listed on a Canadian stock exchange) based in the area. However, the demand on these programs has increased as a result of the arrival of the new IDPs to the point where MSF-H and the Catholic Church are unable to assist all that should normally be admitted.

¶19. (U) Non-food-items including blankets, plastic sheeting, cooking pots, soap, and cups supplied by UNICEF are being distributed by MSF-H. Stocks already in place will cover up to 13,000 new IDPs.

¶10. (U) Food needs have not been sufficiently covered. Although MSF-H distributes two-week supplies of BP5 high protein biscuits, it is clear that they are being consumed directly after distribution. Almost all of the new IDPs had been living in forest areas for months before arriving at Dubie and have no food supplies. Some of the IDPs have been able to arrange to receive small quantities of food or money from local residents in exchange for work. Unfortunately, these arrangements are highly exploitative. Food quantities paid are very small. Those receiving cash get only 100 Congolese Francs (20 cents) per day.

¶11. (U) At the time of OFDA Rep's visit, the World Food Program (WFP) had already sent 109 tons of food from its warehouses in Lubumbashi towards Dubie. The first 30 tons arrived in Dubie the week following the visit, and the remaining 79 tons had traveled as far as Kilwa, 100 km southeast of Dubie. This first shipment is intended to provide sufficient food for 13,000 IDPs for 1 month. WFP is tentatively planning to maintain general food distributions in Dubie for three months.

¶12. (U) Another serious need that has as yet not been addressed is that of clothing. Most of the new IDPs are in desperate need of clothing. CARITAS, however, has stated that it will be able to distribute clothing to those most in need.

Relations between IDPs and residents

¶13. (U) The IDPs are of Luba-Katanga ethnicity, while the resident population of Dubie belongs mainly to the Bazela group. Disagreements between the two groups have been common since the early 70s and significant mutual distrust lingers. The massive influx of Luba-Katanga IDPs into Bazela territory has thus not been well received by the local population. Relatively few IDPs have been hosted by local families, leaving most no alternative but to stay in the camps. Dubie residents have also in the past not allowed IDP children to attend the same schools as their own children, preferring to assist them to build a separate school. Discussions are underway to build yet another school for the newly arrived IDP community.

¶14. (U) Another consequence of the dislike between the resident and IDP populations in Dubie is that very few IDP families of those who arrived last July have been able to secure any land for food production. Although USAID/OFDA-

very few of the Dubie IDPs were able to participate in the project during the last planting season due to their lack of access to land. The situation is expected to be the same for the new IDPs unless Dubie residents can be convinced to rent out land for the next season. If the land-access issue cannot be solved, UMCOR has plans to assist the IDPs by instituting some income-generating activities using USDA funding.

The IDPs and FARDC forces

¶15. (U) Upon arriving in Dubie, IDPs are first screened by FARDC troops. Males over 10 years of age are separated from females and young children. They are then asked to identify themselves if they have been part of Gedeon's Mai Mai movement. Those who come forward are requested to identify others within the group who did not identify themselves.

¶16. (U) After identifying possible Mai Mai combatants, the FARDC officer in charge of screening asks for all those who have been simply "baptized" by Gedeon to step forward. (A common practice for Gedeon's troops is to go to schools and pour water on teachers and students to symbolize their introduction into the Mai Mai movement.) At the time of OFDA Rep's visit, there were a total of 65 children identified as having been recruited in this manner. Most said that they never joined Gedeon despite being baptized and remained with their families. According to military officials, all the presumed Mai Mai combatants, including children, will be sent to Lubumbashi to go through the demobilization and reintegration process managed by the Commission Nationale de Demobilisation and Reinsertion (CONADER).

¶17. (U) Despite the heavy presence of FARDC troops, there is overall a peaceful cohabitation between soldiers and civilians in Dubie, with civilians expressing relatively few complaints about military presence and behavior. However, it is not clear how long this harmony will last as FARDC troops have not received salaries since they arrived in the area three months ago and are beginning to express resentment. FARDC soldiers also complained to OFDA Rep of not having received food rations in three weeks. There is a concern that FARDC will force IDPs to share their WFP food once this is distributed.

Prospects for IDP return

¶18. (U) The situation is now calm in areas close to Dubie, the Mai Mai being believed to have headed toward the Upemba National Park. According to military commanders, military operations are underway from Dubie to the northwest towards Manono and to the west of Dubie towards Mitwaba. The general in command of FARDC troops said that his forces had already taken over many positions that used to be controlled by Mai Mai. The General estimated that calm will return and access to the area will be fully reestablished by the end of January 2006. However, IDPs with whom OFDA Rep spoke said they would not attempt a return to their home villages until they received confirmation that the problem of Gedeon and his followers had been definitively resolved.

Kizabi

¶19. (U) Mai Mai forces also attacked the locality of Kizabi in Pweto territory, burning several villages and driving the population to flee to Kisabala, a village located 30 km north of Pweto town. INGO IOM reports having registered about 3500 IDPs from Kizabi in Kisabala.

Recommendations

¶20. (U) Participants on this assessment mission will recommend that CONADER officials travel to Dubie to evaluate the situation of child Mai Mai in FARDC detention before any forced separation from their families is initiated.

¶21. (U) Participants also felt that it was important that pressure be exerted on local authorities to make land for crop cultivation accessible to the IDPs. IDPs will probably not return to their villages until the dry season starts in June-July. Food security and income generating projects for IDP groups will be needed in the meantime to reduce vulnerability to disease and malnutrition.

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